

Coastal Markers



Volume 7, Issue 3

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

Winter 2004

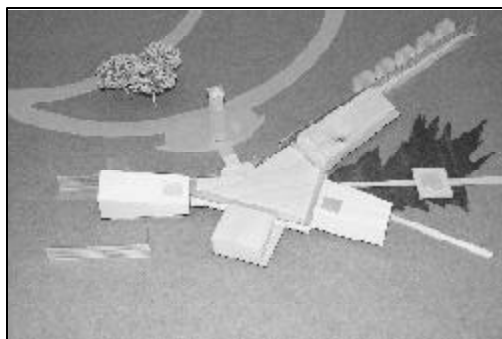
GBNERR receives \$5.9 million facilities grant

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) has received a \$5.9 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Estuarine Reserves Division for construction of permanent facilities. Planning and construction of the facilities will take place over the next three years.

"We have been working closely with Sen. Thad Cochran's office and NOAA to secure this grant, and we very much appreciate the assistance we have received," said DMR Executive Director William Walker. "These permanent facilities will enable us to more effectively conduct our educa-



DMR Executive Director William Walker talks about the partnerships with NOAA, Sen. Thad Cochran's office and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that made the GBNERR facilities grant possible during an open house on Dec. 5 at the reserve.



The GBNERR facilities master plan concept model. Once completed, the facility will be one of the only "green" structures—constructed using environmentally friendly practices and materials—in Mississippi.

tion and research programs and to provide a unique window through which the public can enjoy this spectacular environmental area."

"I am pleased that funds are being released to construct permanent facilities for research and education that will benefit our state and nation," said U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran.

The GBNERR unveiled the master plan concept for the facilities at a press conference held Dec. 5. The new facilities, which will follow guidelines of the U.S. Green Building Council, will incorporate energy efficient and environmentally sound construction materials and techniques.

Through a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the new

facilities will be constructed on federal properties at the GBNERR's current office location and will house the GBNERR and the Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge offices.

"We are pleased to support the Grand Bay
See FACILITIES, page 4

DMR launches oyster relief effort project

The DMR is currently working on a project to promote good stewardship among oyster harvesters. The project is called Mississippi Oyster Relief Effort (MORE). The first phase of the project is to conduct a voluntary survey of both commercial and recreational oyster fishermen. This survey is designed to solicit input from fishermen about methods they use to protect and conserve Mississippi's valuable oyster resources. Examples of ideas already submitted include culling oysters carefully and returning as many small oysters to the water as possible and for fisher-

men to return the shells of the oysters that they use for their own consumption to the reef.

When the survey is completed a brochure will be developed using the best ideas and distributed to oyster harvesters. This is a way for fishermen to share ideas with each other on environmentally friendly harvesting techniques and practices. Stewardship tips will be also included on the DMR's Oyster Information Hotline, which informs fishermen of the opening and closing status of harvesting areas.

Inside this issue...

CRMP releases stormwater toolbox to cities, counties3

DMR receives coastal fire management co-op grant.....4

Winners of DMR 2004 calendar art contest.....5

Marine Patrol Citation Totals.....6

Clean marina program under development.....7

NERR Notes.....8

Seafood Safety Corner9

Calendar of Events.....12

Doc's Fishing Tips.....12

Coastal Markers is a publication of the



**Mississippi Department
of Marine Resources**

1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101
Biloxi, MS 39530
(228) 374-5000

www.dmr.state.ms.us

State of Mississippi

Haley Barbour
Governor

**Mississippi Commission on
Marine Resources**

Rickey J. Hemba, Chairman
Recreational Sports Fisherman

Mikel C. Gusa, Vice Chairman
Charter Boat Operator

Vernon Asper, Ph.D.
Nonprofit Environmental Organization

Oliver Sahuque
Commercial Fisherman

Rudy A. Lesso
Commercial Seafood Processor

William W. Walker, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Fred Deegen, Ph.D.
Deputy Director

**Coastal Markers is produced by
the Office of Public Affairs**

Lauren S. Thompson
Editor-in-Chief

Susan Lepoma Perkins
Writer/Editor/Graphic Designer

Marti Schuman
Writer/Editor

*This publication was funded through
a federal grant from the National Ocea-
nic and Atmospheric Administration
(NOAA), Office of Ocean and Coastal
Resource Management under the
Coastal Zone Management Act of
1972, as amended.*

***Managing your marine resources
today...for a sound tomorrow.***

Director's Notes

Dr. William Walker



It is with a great deal of hope and optimism that we open the pages of yet another year in the annals of marine resources management in Mississippi.

A new governor and administration in Jackson bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and high expectations for improving governmental services to help meet the increased needs of the citizens of this state. We at the Department of Marine Resources are up to that challenge, and the many seeds planted last year should begin to blossom to fruition in 2004.

From all indications, the overall health of our marine resources is good. Shrimp landings consistently hover from about 14 to 16 million pounds each year, even though our shrimp fishermen continue to suffer because of low prices for their catch. Landings of crabs and finfish are also consistent with former years, an indication of the continued health and productivity of these important species. Oyster landings also will easily exceed last year's catch of some 391,000 sacks.

We have recently distributed more than \$5 million in Tidelands Trust Funds that will provide enhanced public access to coastal and marine resources and at the same time provide needed research focused on important management opportunities such as the development of a speckled trout hatchery facility and associated seatrout stocking program. A joint program between the DMR and USM's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, this effort will do much towards enhancing the stocks of the state's most favorite species among sports fishermen.

A CIAP-funded project that will utilize sophisticated CODAR radar to help marine patrol officers locate and track vessels in distress and even individuals in the water is also currently in the works.

These are but a few of the new initiatives we have planned for the coming year, but they will be milestone programs in helping the agency fulfill its stewardship role in the wise management of our coastal and marine resources not just in 2004, but in the more distant future.

William W. Walker
Executive Director

**Boat and Water Safety Course
Schedule (January-March 2004)**

Call the DMR Boat and Water Safety Bureau at (228) 435-1332 for more details. All classes are free. Pre-registration is required.

- **Jan. 10**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **Jan. 12-13**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 6-9 p.m.
- **Jan. 26-27**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 6-9 p.m.
- **Jan. 31**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 Hwy. 90, Bay St. Louis, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **Feb. 2-3**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 6-9 p.m.
- **Feb. 7**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **Feb. 14**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **Feb. 21**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **Feb. 23-24**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 6-9 p.m.
- **Feb. 25-26**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 6-9 p.m.
- **March 1-2**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 6-9 p.m.
- **March 6**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Thank you!

A very special thanks to the following employees who contributed to this issue of Coastal Markers:

<i>Jennifer Buchanan</i>	<i>Ruth Posadas</i>
<i>Jeff Clark</i>	<i>Rhonda Price</i>
<i>Kerwin Cuevas</i>	<i>Katie Rosetti</i>
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	<i>Dave Ruple</i>
<i>Dr. Fred Deegen</i>	<i>Kevin Schultz</i>
<i>Dale Diaz</i>	<i>Amy Taylor</i>
<i>Marcia Garcia</i>	<i>Mike Walker</i>
<i>Scott Gordon</i>	<i>Frank Wescovich</i>
<i>Stanley Hamilton</i>	

CRMP releases stormwater toolbox to cities, counties

Cities and counties along the Mississippi Gulf Coast faced with complying with EPA mandates on pollution are getting some welcome assistance from the DMR's Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP). To help Coast cities and counties successfully comply with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's regulations requiring them to implement stormwater management plans, the DMR's CRMP has developed a valuable resource known as the Mississippi Gulf Coast Stormwater Management Toolbox.

Two years in the making, this hefty two-volume guide to stormwater management rules and regulations was distributed to coastal city and county officials at the CRMP's October meeting to assist them in developing their plans to manage stormwater runoff and in selecting best management practices. It is a comprehensive collection of EPA-recommended best management practices on stormwater management and includes model ordinances and vendor lists.

Eco-Systems, Inc. was lead consultant on the stormwater toolbox project. Neel-Schaffer also played a role in the development of the toolbox.

"This is another prime example of collaboration and partnerships by city and county leaders who have been working on smart growth issues for the region for the past five years," said CRMP Director Tina Shumate.

In 1972, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program (NPDES) was established under the authority of the Clean Water Act. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality is delegated by EPA to run the state's NPDES programs. Phase I of the NPDES stormwater program was established in 1990. It required NPDES permit coverage for large or medium municipalities that have populations of 100,000 or more. There are no Phase I communities on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Phase II of the NPDES Stormwater program was signed into law in December 1999. This regulation builds upon the existing Phase I program by re-



Gary Fitzpatrick (center) of the City of Gulfport receives the two-volume Mississippi Gulf Coast Stormwater Management Toolbox from DMR Executive Director William Walker (right) and CRMP Staff Officer Marcia Garcia (left) at CRMP's October meeting.

quiring smaller communities, also known as small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s), to be permitted.

On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, there are 14 Phase II communities including: Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties;

"This is another prime example of collaboration and partnerships by city and county leaders who have been working on smart growth issues for the region for the past five years."—Tina Shumate, CRMP Director

and the cities of Bay St. Louis, Waveland, Biloxi, D'Iberville, Gulfport, Long Beach, Pass Christian, Gautier, Moss Point, Ocean Springs, and Pascagoula. All these areas were named in the Federal Register and were federally mandated to develop and implement a Stormwater Phase II Program to manage stormwater runoff.

Those communities permitted under Phase II are required to develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater management program that includes six minimum measures: (1) public education and outreach on stormwater impacts; (2) public involvement/participation; (3) illicit discharge detection and elimination; (4) construction site stormwater runoff control; (5) post-construction stormwater management for new development and redevelopment; and (6) pollu-

tion prevention/good housekeeping for municipal operations.

Besides its value as a tool to assist the coastal communities in complying with the EPA's mandate to implement stormwater runoff and pollution management plans, the stormwater toolbox can also be used by the six southern counties and cities as a resource to better manage stormwater runoff in the future.

The toolbox was produced by the DMR/CRMP through funding from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, which administers the Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). CIAP is a federally sponsored program that provides

money for the state and counties to address issues that relate to the coastal environment and ecology.

The toolbox was designed to be a resource document for city and county engineers, public works directors, developers and contractors, road maintenance crews, city and county planners, and professional engineers for selecting measures to employ as part of their stormwater runoff management program. It also contains information that will assist local decision-makers with stormwater runoff management decisions and provide many long-term benefits to Coast communities.

"The toolbox is a valuable tool with a wealth of information that will promote water quality protection and management into the lifestyle of the coastal community," said Marcia Garcia, CRMP staff officer and project manager. "But it would not have been possible without the guidance and support from the CRMP stakeholders, the stormwater management committee, the CIAP coordinators, and representatives from each of the designated Stormwater Phase II entities."

CRMP is focused on the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy and the necessary tools to better manage the impacts of economic growth and development on the environment of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Mississippi Stormwater Management Toolbox is now available online.

Visit the DMR Web site at www.dmr.state.ms.us. Click on CRMP, then click on Storm water.

DMR receives coastal fire management co-op grant

The DMR was recently named lead agency for the Coastal Mississippi Fire Management Cooperative CIAP grant. Its purpose is to expand the application of prescribed fire management in coastal Mississippi to reduce the risks of severe wildfires and maximize the ecological functions of fire-adapted coastal ecosystems.

"It is critical that we address the problem of altered fire regimes in coastal Mississippi by shifting our focus from fire suppression to managing fire-adapted ecosystems," said DMR Executive Director William Walker. "This grant will allow us to work collaboratively to do that."

Fire plays a vital role in shaping many of the ecosystems common to coastal Mississippi. Nearly all terrestrial and many wetland ecosystems experience fire at some interval, and many include plants and animals adapted to or dependent on periodic fires. When key attributes of a fire-adapted ecosystem are altered—for example, by fire suppression—the natural character and ecological functions of these ecosystems may be dramatically altered and degraded.

On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, altered fire regimes are primarily the result of fire suppression and changing land use. The suppression of natural periodic fires and the underuse of prescribed fire has resulted, in some instances, in a dangerous



The Dantzer Nature Preserve is managed through fire, making way for native plant species and reducing the risks of wildfires.

buildup of fuels and in altered habitats with degraded ecological functions. The trend in such areas is toward wildfires of increasing intensity and severity that threaten ecosystem health as well as lives and property.

The Coastal Mississippi Fire Management Cooperative is a collaborative effort of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson County Fire Coordinators, the Mississippi Forestry Commission, the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, the DMR, the USDA Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

This cooperative effort is made possible through funding from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), which administers the Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). CIAP is a federally sponsored program that provides

money for the state and counties to address issues that relate to the coastal environment and ecology.

Goals of the Coastal Mississippi Fire Management Cooperative:

- Provide training and equipment that will improve local capacity to implement fire management in the coastal area;
- Hold regular meetings that will promote and increase understanding and communication between fire managers, i.e., county fire coordinators; local fire departments; volunteer fire departments; federal, state and private

conservation land managers; Mississippi Forestry Commission and the DEQ;

- Create and implement a fire management plan for the coastal area using Cooperative resources and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU);

- Identify measures of success for ecological lift and hazard reduction;

- Design pilot projects (prescribed fires) that will help the Cooperative develop procedures, capacity and communication;

- Foster public outreach/education about prescribed fire management, both fire ecology in the coastal plain and hazard reduction;

- Form a subcommittee or South Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council that will share information among fire managers and land managers and review state laws regarding fire and smoke management.

FACILITIES, continued from page 1

Reserve in expanding its capacity to serve the local and regional communities," said Eldon Hout, director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. "This facility will provide citizens with a venue to gain hands-on educational experiences and training. On a national level, the reserve is a platform for research and monitoring. This facility will be used by visiting scientists and students who are improving our understanding of the coastal environment."

The master plan for the new facilities consists of education/training, interpretative, research, dormitory and administrative components to provide support

for outside scientists and educators and to support the research, education and stewardship functions of the GBNERR.

"The permanent facilities at the reserve will allow us to better address our mission to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of our vital coastal resources," said GBNERR manager Dave Ruple. "We are extremely enthusiastic about the opportunity to construct a 'green' facility, using a variety of energy- and resource-efficient materials and techniques during the planning, construction and operational phases of this project."

The Grand Bay Reserve is located in southeast Jackson County and includes wild lands and waterways from Bangs Lake to the Alabama state line. A major goal of the

Grand Bay Reserve is to provide for research coordination and dissemination of scientific data to the community and local decision-makers to provide sound information on which to base management decisions. The more than 18,000-acre reserve is home to several rare plant and animal species and serves as an essential nursery habitat for numerous important commercial and recreational fish species.

The GBNERR is managed through state-federal partnership between the DMR and its local partners: Mississippi Secretary of State's Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi State University, The University of Southern Mississippi, The Nature Conservancy and NOAA.

DMR announces calendar art contest winners

The DMR has announced the winners of the "Preserving and Enjoying Mississippi's Coastal Resources" 2004 Marine Information Calendar art contest.

In an effort to promote awareness of the value of our coastal resources, the DMR held an art contest for high school students in the three



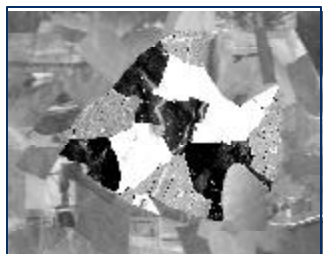
January



February



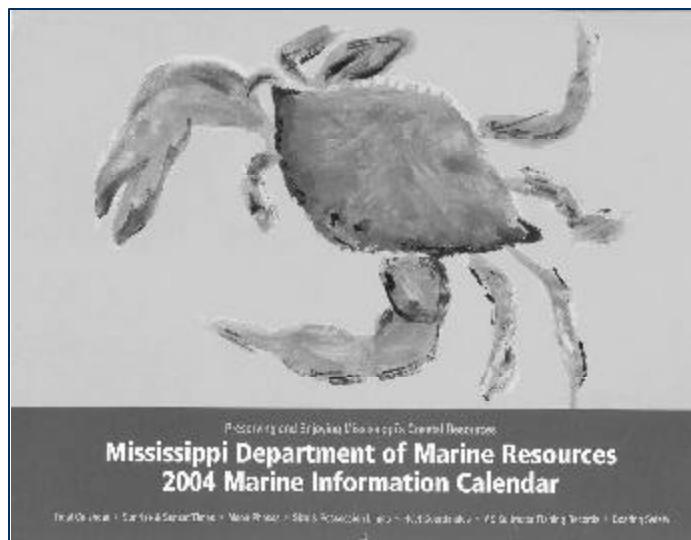
March



April



May



The artwork of Amanda Kistler is featured on the cover of the DMR's 2004 Marine Information Calendar.

Coast counties. Students were asked to create artwork illustrating the contest theme: "Preserving and Enjoying Mississippi's Coastal Resources." The winning artwork appears in the 2004 calendar.

"The student artwork featured in this calendar clearly shows that the young folks in our community understand the importance of our coastal resources," said DMR Executive Director William Walker. "By nurturing this awareness through education, we can help our children to grow to be wise stewards of their coastal environment."

The winners have their artwork featured on the months listed:

- January: Christina Jackson of Vancleave High School;
- February: Blake Thames of Moss Point High School;
- March: Brad Osborne of

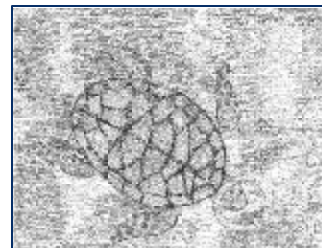
Pascagoula High School;

- April: Samantha Miller of D'Iberville High School;
- May: Josh Welsh of Moss Point High School;
- June: Kelsey Carter of Vancleave High School;
- July: Heath Fitzgerald of Vancleave High School;
- August: Amanda Kistler of Pascagoula High School;
- September: Samantha Taggart of Moss Point High School;
- October: Kyle Marcellus of Ocean Springs High School;
- November: Larhonda Galloway of Pascagoula High School;
- December: Michelle Dupree of Vancleave High School.

The artwork of Jonathan Laforce of D'Iberville High School, Courtney Dobbs of D'Iberville High School and Joel Calhoun of D'Iberville High School appears on the

calendar's back cover.

The calendar highlights Department of Marine Resources programs and contains tide information, sunrise and sunset times, moon phases, reef coordinates, size and possession limits, boating safety information, Mississippi saltwater fishing records and marine debris information.



September



October



November



December



August



June



July

Oyster season: Sack total on the rise

Mississippi oyster season opened in select harvest areas on Sept. 10 and in all areas on Oct. 10.

As of Dec. 31, 2003, the season sack total was 287,701, which is greater than what was harvested at that time last oyster season. Last year on Dec. 31, the sack total was 160,379.

This year's high production is attributed to favorable weather conditions resulting in fewer reef closures; earlier participation by harvesters; new reef

acreage created by cultch plants; hard work on the part of the oyster harvesters; and flexibility of management given to the Commission on Marine Resources and the DMR



The 2002-2003 oyster season sack total was 391,635 sacks. The landings for the 2003-2004 season are on track to surpass last year's total.

by the state legislature.

"All signs point to a productive season," said DMR Shellfish Bureau Director Scott Gordon.

Photos Celebrate Pascagoula River



DMR coastal ecologist Leah Bray visits the *Paradise in Peril: Preserving the Pascagoula* photo exhibit at the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs during the opening reception held Oct. 29. The photos in the exhibit are from the "Paradise in Peril" series which ran in *The Sun Herald* during November. The sponsors of the exhibit include the DMR, ChevronTexaco, River Smart, *The Sun Herald* and the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office. The Pascagoula River is the last free-flowing, unimpeded major river system in the lower 48 states.

Marine Patrol Citation Totals

(October-December 2003)

Shrimp	1
Crab	6
Oyster	56
Commercial Net Fishing	9
Live Bait	2
Miscellaneous Seafood	2
Recreational Fishing	33
Boat and Water Safety	16
Marine Litter	2
Miscellaneous	13

Boat and Water Safety Statistics

(October-December 2003)

Classes held	10
Students certified	84
Outreach events	1
Presentations	4
Boating accidents	8
Fatalities	3

Sound Advice

Lt. Frank Wescovich



Spring is just around the corner and hopefully everyone made it through the cold days of winter without too much trouble. It is time to

start getting the boat and all associated gear ready for the warmer weather trips. Here are some tips that should help to make your outings on the water more trouble free.

1. Fill your fuel tank with fresh fuel and test run your engine before venturing out. Old fuel that was left in the tank might work, but is it worth taking the chance?

2. Check out your lifejackets, flare kits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, etc. Check expiration dates on items and replenish as necessary. DMR Boating Safety will be happy to provide required equipment lists and check sheets for these items.

3. Check out your running lights, radio and other electronics. Replace any batteries that may have gone weak over the winter. Make sure you have spare fuses onboard for electronics and electrical items.

4. Check your main starting battery. Make sure it is fully charged and capable of holding a charge. Most service stations have a load tester that will tell you the exact condition of your battery. The cost to have this checked is usually only a few dollars. This quick check will give you a good heads up to future problems before they leave you stranded out on the water.

5. Make sure all of your other gear items such as tool kits, anchor and line, mooring lines, fenders and bilge pumps are onboard and in good working order. Bilge pumps should be actually tested by pumping water. You should also manually actuate your bilge pump float switch to ensure it is working properly. Most bilge pump problems are the result of faulty float switches.

6. Last, but not least, check out your

See SOUND ADVICE, page 9

MS adopts Clean Marina Program

Mississippi and Alabama will soon have a Clean Marina Program, thanks to a collaborative effort between the DMR and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium—with assistance from the marine trade industry, marina associations, recreational boaters and charter boat marinas in the two states.

The Clean Marina Program is designed to show that marina operators in Mississippi and Alabama can help safeguard the environment by using management and operations techniques that go above and beyond regulatory requirements. The voluntary program will launch by spring 2004.

“This long-awaited new program will recognize environmentally responsible businesses along the coast,” said Rhonda Price, the DMR’s Clean Vessel Act coordinator.

Clean Marina is a nationwide non-regulatory program developed by the National Marine Environmental Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works to clean up waterways for better recreational boating. The foundation encourages states to adapt Clean Marina principles to fit their own needs. Mississippi and Alabama join North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Texas and Maryland, as states with Clean Marina programs in place.

The Mississippi-Alabama Clean Marina Program is a voluntary recognition program. Marinas that choose to pledge, implement best management practices and meet the designated program criteria, will

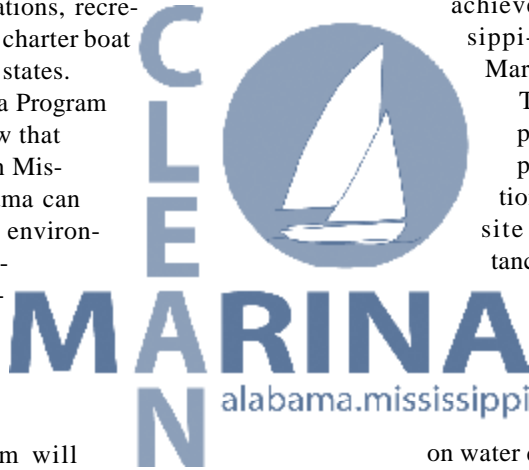
achieve official Mississippi-Alabama Clean Marina status.

The educational program will provide pollution prevention guidance and on-site technical assistance to marinas, local governments, and recreational boaters to minimize potentially negative impacts

on water quality and coastal resources.

If a marina meets the criteria developed by the Mississippi-Alabama Clean Marina Program advisory and management committees, it will be designated as a Clean Marina. Upon designation as a Clean Marina, a marina facility gains valuable free publicity as an environmentally responsible business. The marina will be eligible to fly the Clean Marina flag and use the logo in its advertising. The flag will signal to boaters that the marina cares about the cleanliness of area waterways.

For more information about the Mississippi-Alabama Clean Marina Program, contact the DMR at (228) 374-5000.



State Record Breakers!

Conventional tackle:

Chris Mosley of Gulfport broke the state record for Almaco Jack August 2 weighing 16 pounds, 11.2 ounces surpassing the previous record of 15 pounds, 0.166 ounces set in 2003.

Chris Mosley of Gulfport also broke the state record for King Snake Eel August 2 weighing 10 pounds, 12.8 ounces surpassing the previous record of 2 pounds, 6.56 ounces set in 2003.

Donated vessel becomes artificial reef



The Gwen Tide.



The Gwen Tide is deployed on FH-13.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, in cooperation with Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, deployed a 180-foot steel hull supply vessel, the Gwen Tide, onto a permitted reef site Nov. 28. The vessel was sunk at Fish Haven 13, an area about 12 miles south of Petit Bois Island. The Gwen Tide was donated by Tidewater Marine in Louisiana for use in the Mississippi Artificial Reef Program. Gulf Stream Enterprises deployed the vessel.

Coming soon to a biosphere near you...

BioBlitz

April 30-May 1

Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

For info, contact: (228) 475-7047

NERR Notes

Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve



GBNERR reflects on 2003, looks ahead to new year



Dave Ruple

Now that the year 2003 has come to a close, we have an opportunity to reflect upon a very good year and look forward to future activities at the reserve. After serving as manager of the reserve over the past year and having been involved with the development of the reserve over the past 12 years, I have much to reflect upon.

Grand Bay is one of the 26 reserves within the national system of reserves and the only reserve in the Gulf of Mexico west of Weeks Bay, Alabama. Establishing the reserve was not an easy chore, taking some seven years from our initial efforts to the 1999 dedication ceremony. The reserve became a reality only



A strategic planning session was held at Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs to make important reserve management board decisions.

through the long-time efforts of a dedicated group of volunteers and proponents. The teamwork required to create the reserve was second to none that I have ever been associated with. As the year ends, our devoted supporters can look upon their efforts with pride in seeing the progress being made at the reserve. We can be thankful for new public access points at the Oak Grove Trail, the Bayou Heron Fishing Pier and Boat Ramp, our enlarged office space, growing research, stewardship and education programs and continued support.

As we begin a new year we look forward to a new phase in our development. I anticipate that within a year more than 20 research projects will be ongoing at Grand Bay. The reserve's federal initiatives such as weather and water quality monitoring, coastal training program, Graduate Research Fellowships and coastal decision-making workshops will continue. And finally, planning and construction for a new permanent reserve facilities complex will begin. The efforts of the coming year will indeed take the Grand Bay Reserve to the next level.

The new complex will serve as an important tool in facilitating our work at the reserve, but more so, will in itself serve as a

teaching tool. Buildings will be planned and constructed as "green" buildings, utilizing state-of-the-art energy construction design and environmentally friendly building techniques and materials. We will utilize standards developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and we believe the buildings themselves will serve to demonstrate sustainable building practices in coastal Mississippi. To the best of our knowledge, no other public building in the state has been built in this fashion, but we hope the NERR will start a trend.

As the Grand Bay NERR moves forward, we want to establish an overall program that we can all be proud of.

Dave Ruple is the manager of the DMR/Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. For more information about the reserve, call (228) 475-7047.



Environmental writer Becky Gillette (left), Commission on Marine Resources member Dr. Vernon Asper (center) and DEQ Water Quality Education Specialist Janet Chapman (right) enjoy the new Bayou Heron Fishing Pier. The new pier and boat ramp facility was constructed in 2003.



Students use the reserve as a living laboratory for a science fair project.



Seafood Safety Corner

It is an on-going effort of the Seafood Technology Bureau to conduct routine and follow-up inspections of seafood facilities. It is also time for semi-annual water quality sampling for all certified and permitted seafood-processing

facilities.

Seafood Technology is preparing for its program evaluation of the State Shellfish Plant and Sanitation Program administered by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to occur in February 2004. For fiscal year 2003, the FDA's Annual Program Evaluation Report on the state's plant processing and shipping program status reports that no illness outbreaks associated with plant problems occurred during the five years preceding the assessment. As a result, the Mississippi Shellfish Sanitation Program Plant Processing and Shipping element was not evaluated during FY 2003.

Currently, there are 46 certified and permitted oyster dealers in the state of Mississippi. There are 19 shellstock shippers, 11 reshippers, 3 repackers and 13 shucker-packers. The fiscal year 2004 program evaluation was done with the 1999 version of the Model Ordinance. The Seafood Technology Bureau will start the transition to the 2002 version beginning in January 2004.

Since January 2003, 12 new seafood facilities have been certified by the DMR. The Seafood Technology Bureau continues to offer interim HACCP and Sanitation training to anyone who wishes to be involved in the seafood business. This training is to help the dealers understand the basics and get started with their business. They are advised to attend the formal training course offered annually by the Association of Food and Drug Officials' (AFDO). Mem-

bers of the Mississippi seafood industry and neighboring states are continually served with this training course conducted by the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center in Pascagoula in collaboration with the Seafood Technology Bureau. The next course offering will be February 2-5, 2004. If someone has not had HACCP and Sanitation training or had interim training offered by the DMR, it is recommended that they attend the HACCP and Sanitation workshop sponsored by AFDO.



Jeff Davis

There is an open invitation from Louisiana State University (LSU) for the MS Seafood Industry to attend their 2nd Annual Louisiana Food Processors Conference held at LSU on March 3-4, 2004. Those interested can contact Terri Gilmer or Shannah Spencer at (225) 578-5207 or e-mail tgilmer@agcenter.lsu.edu. This conference is intended for food processors and those interested in value-added food processing.

Seafood Technology staff and other DMR employees volunteered their time for public outreach activities, which included Celebrate the Gulf and the Jackson County Fair. Conferences attended by members of our staff included: the International West Coast Seafood Show held in Long Beach, Calif., the year two Oyster Project Planning Meeting held in Tampa, Fla., and the 27th Annual Conference of the Seafood Science and Technology Society of the Americas held in Biloxi. Educational and promotional materials such as posters, videos, DVDs, and brochures discussing post-harvest processing technologies for oysters and seafood safety were distributed to the public.

Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) technology is not foreign to the local seafood industry. It is used in shrimp processing and this technology will soon be adapted by one of our local oyster processors.

Jeff Davis is a seafood officer with the DMR's Seafood Technology Bureau.

Two new requirements to deter illegal sale of finfish

New requirements to Ordinance 9.004 (I), an ordinance to regulate statistical reporting and confidentiality of statistical data from marine fisheries, went into effect November 1.

The two new requirements are:

- Each firm or individual, whether or not licensed by the DMR, purchasing red drum, spotted seatrout, flounder and/or cobia for resale from commercial fishermen, will keep a record of quantity and species purchased from each commercial fisherman and record the license number of the commercial fisherman on the purchase receipt for inspection by DMR personnel; and

- DMR enforcement personnel are authorized to inspect any and all seafood purchase and/or sales receipts from firms or individuals, whether or not licensed by the DMR to ensure reporting requirements listed in this ordinance. DMR enforcement personnel may not reveal confidential information except as it applies in violations of the reporting requirement in this ordinance.

The new requirements are being implemented to help prevent the sale of recreationally caught spotted seatrout, red drum, cobia and flounder.

Get the latest
information about your
marine resources

ONLINE



www.dmr.state.ms.us

SOUND ADVICE, continued from page 6

trailer. Remember to check wheel bearings, tires, brake lights, safety chains and coupler. The boat trailer is most often the most neglected item in boating. While you are

at it, check out the trailer hitch on the towing vehicle. This is often neglected too.

Remember:

WEAR YOUR LIFEJACKET.

SAFE BOATING IS NO ACCIDENT!

Lt. Frank Wescovich oversees the DMR's Boat and Water Safety Program. He can be reached at (228) 432-2820 or (228) 435-1332.

See page 2 for a schedule of free boating safety classes.

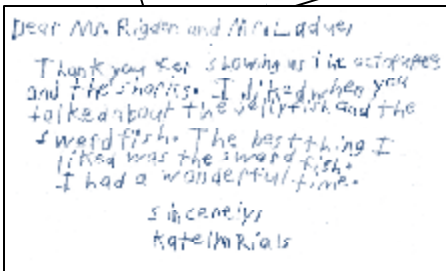
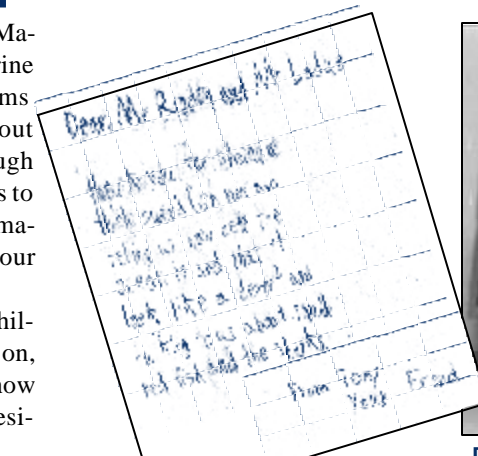
Students get up close with MS marine resources

Each year DMR staff members from Marine Fisheries, Coastal Ecology and Marine Patrol offices are invited to classrooms across the Coast to talk to students about the value of our coastal resources. Through outreach and education, the DMR hopes to instill in these students a love for our marine environment and an awareness of our rich coastal heritage.

"I think it's important to introduce children to our native marine species early on, so that they'll gain an understanding of how our economy and the livelihood of our residents depend on our marine resources," said DMR marine fisheries biologist Jude LeDoux.

Recently, LeDoux and fellow DMR marine fisheries biologist Mike Rigdon visited Mrs. Wright's fourth-grade class at Martin Bluff Elementary in Gautier, taking with them specimens of flounder, octopus, Red Drum, sharks, jellyfish, shrimp and oysters. The class was able to see these residents of the Gulf first-hand and to learn facts such as how a flounder's eyes work and how an oyster eats.

The two DMR biologists received thank you letters from the entire class. "I really liked it when you showed that flounder," Kain Shumach, a fourth-grade student at Martin Bluff Elementary, wrote in a thank you letter to LeDoux and Rigdon. "It is fasci-



Two of the letters received from Dena Wright's fourth grade class at Martin Bluff Elementary.

nating how a flounder's eyes [are] on one side."

Garrett Wilson, also a fourth-grade student at Martin Bluff Elementary, wrote in a thank you letter: "I liked when you showed us the flounder, ramora the shark suckers and the red fish. I didn't know that a red fish had a big dot on its tail."

DMR staff members participated in more



Dena Wright's fourth-grade class at Martin Bluff Elementary in Gautier.

than 40 educational events during 2003, reaching out to over 30,000 people, including thousands of students, and distributing information on such topics as boat and water safety, the importance of wetlands, the effects of marine debris, fish common to Mississippi's marine waters and DMR programs.

"In addition to performing their daily duties—enhancing, protecting and conserving our marine resources—DMR staffers also take the time to educate students about the importance of those resources," said DMR Executive Director William Walker. "If students learn to appreciate our marine resources at a young age, we believe they will grow to be wise stewards of their coastal environment."

Local students go global at GIS Day 2003 held Nov. 19

Five schools participated in GIS Day activities, hosted by The University of Southern Mississippi on the Coast, the Southern Miss Gulf Coast Geospatial Center (GCGC), the DMR and the Mississippi Association of Spatial Technologies (MAST), on Nov. 19 at the Southern Miss Gulf Park Campus in Long Beach.

Students from North Gulfport Seventh and Eighth Grade Magnet School, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College West Harrison County Center, Biloxi High School, Long Beach High School and Picayune Memorial High School visited booths, competed in a quiz bowl competition and listened to presentations about geography and geographic information systems (GIS) technology.

DMR staffers Kevin Schultz and Grant



Southern Miss geography department's Jerry Coleman (standing) asks MGCCC West Harrison County Center students (left) and Long Beach High School students (right) questions during the Geography/GIS Quiz Bowl during GIS Day 2003 activities. Jeanne Allen with Planning Systems, Inc. (at podium) was the time and score keeper.

Larsen gave a presentation to demonstrate how DMR uses GIS to better manage coastal marine resources.

"GIS allows the user to create "smart maps" by linking databases to the map features to make better, informed decisions. The various CRMP stakeholders are making great strides in using GIS to inventory, maintain and better manage their resources," said Kevin Schultz, DMR's CRMP GIS manager.

GIS Day is a global event that celebrates geographic information systems, a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing objects and events. GIS combines the power of a database with the visualization capabilities offered by maps. GIS takes information from a database about a place or feature, such as streets, buildings, water bodies, soils and terrain, and turns it into visual data layers. Seeing these layers enables planners and analysts to make informed decisions about their communities.



Take a Bow

Recognizing employees' commitment to excellence

MP officers graduate from academy



Jason Ferrill



John White

Marine Patrol officers Jason Ferrill and John White graduated from the Southern Regional Public Safety Institute in Long Beach on Nov. 23. Ferrill and White were certified Mississippi law enforcement officers through a nine-week basic academy.

Ferrill received the Gene Taylor Award for high academic achievement in his graduating class.

Legal counsel attend wetlands seminar

DMR legal counsel Joseph Runnels and Sharon Hodge attended a national wetlands seminar Dec. 4-5 in Tampa, Fla., where they listened to experts talk about changes to the Clean Water Act and the Wetlands Protection Act.



Joseph Runnels and Sharon Hodge

One theme followed throughout the discussion was the practice of having all regulation guidance letters issued by federal agency headquarters (i.e., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) require mitigation to be of like-kind wetlands.

PA staff attend Photoshop training



Lauren Thompson



Marti Schuman

DMR Public Relations Director Lauren Thompson and Public Relations Representative Marti Schuman attended Photoshop 7.0 training Nov. 19 and 21 at New Horizons Computer Learning Center in New Orleans.

Thompson and Schuman learned new features of the Photoshop upgrade and how to enhance graphics and photos to look their best in print.

Education and Outreach



DMR Seafood Officer Jan Welker (left) and DMR Seafood Technology Bureau Director Ruth Posadas (right) distribute educational materials at the Seafood Technology Bureau's booth during the Jackson County Fair, held Oct. 18-25 in Pascagoula. Dr. Linda Andrews with Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center conducted a sensory survey of value-added seafood products such as barbecue shrimp and smoked oysters at the booth.

Happy Anniversary!

These anniversaries mark employees' years of service with the Department of Marine Resources and the state of Mississippi.

(1/1/90) Dale Diaz	(1/16/85) Donnie Armes
(1/1/91) Clay Boulet	(1/18/02) Jessy Verges
(1/1/95) Gerald Chatham	(1/29/01) Wesley Devers
(1/1/95) Olin Gunter	(1/29/01) Ruth Posadas
(1/1/95) Rocky Southern	(2/1/76) Chester Van Devender
(1/1/95) Phyllis Davis	(2/1/89) Steve Breland
(1/1/95) Doug Drieling	(2/1/90) Tom Van Devender
(1/1/95) Rita Duvernay	(2/1/99) Jeff Clark
(1/1/95) Kerry Endris	(2/7/03) Roy Lipscomb
(1/1/99) Rhonda Price	(2/25/02) Karen Carron
(1/1/00) Melanie Lane	(3/1/90) Rusty Pittman
(1/1/00) R.T. May	(3/1/98) Amy Taylor
(1/1/00) Jeffery Payne	(3/1/02) Jeff Davis
(1/1/00) Andy Ryals	(3/1/02) Janet Morgan
(1/1/00) Bill Stover	(3/1/02) Jan Welker
(1/1/03) Jamie Herring	(3/12/01) Evelyn Thompson
(1/10/00) Diane Roth	(3/17/99) Leo Christie
(1/13/03) Cindy Henderson	(3/25/02) Debbie Belk
(1/15/98) Jan Boyd	(3/26/01) Jimmy Sanders

We thank them for their dedicated service to the management of our marine resources.



**Mississippi Department
of Marine Resources**
1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 144
BILOXI, MS 39530

DMR Calendar

January 20

Mississippi Commission on
Marine Resources meeting,
Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview
Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

February 12

Comprehensive Resource Man-
agement Plan meeting, Bolton
Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue,
Biloxi, 10 a.m.

February 17

Mississippi Commission on
Marine Resources meeting,
Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview
Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

March 16

Mississippi Commission on
Marine Resources meeting,
Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview
Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

April 8

Comprehensive Resource Manage-
ment Plan meeting, Bolton Build-
ing, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi,
10 a.m.

April 20

Mississippi Commission on Marine
Resources meeting, Bolton
Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue,
Biloxi, 9 a.m.

April 30-May 1

BioBlitz, Grand Bay National
Estuarine Research Reserve.
Contact: (228) 475-7047.

May 10-12

5th annual Coastal Development
Strategies Conference, Grand
Casino, Biloxi. For more informa-
tion contact the DMR at
(228) 374-5000.

Doc's Fishing Tips

Fred Deegen, Ph.D., Deputy Director

This time of year is always a good time for fishing the bays and bayous as trout, reds, flounder and the rest of the nearshore entourage will be stationed in these deeper, warmer waters to sit out the winter. Bouncing a soft plastic jig like a sparkle beetle or cocahoe minnow slowly off the bottom is one sure-fire way to coax a strike out of these sluggish fish.

If you did not receive this issue of Coastal Markers in the mail and would like to be placed on the mailing list, please fill out below and mail to: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Office of Public Affairs, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, MS 39530; call (228) 374-5022, ext. 5062; or e-mail susan.perkins@dmr.state.ms.us.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____